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ABSTRACT

This description of a project in the Netherlands concentrates on the progress made by participating schools since 1974, inhibiting and success factors, and the outlook for the future. The MAVO project provides secondary students with training for administrative functions. One of the characteristics of the program is that it provides a three-year and a four-year course of study. This option, prepared so that both "high stream" and "low stream" ability students can be taught, has made teaching the two groups of students difficult. The MAVO project was set up by teacher unions, the Ministry of Education, school authorities, and national pedagogical centers to assist the teachers and staff in MAVO schools. The MAVO project has focused on developing and disseminating strategies for mixed ability teaching, so that teachers could effectively deal with students in both the "low stream" and the "high stream" courses. The difficulties encountered in implementing the project have been communication gaps between participating agencies and institutions, lack of available staff, and confusion in priorities. Some events have had both positive and negative repercussions, such as the MAVO-trained staff being increasingly attracted to other positions. By 1985, when the MAVO project is scheduled to end, 800 schools will not have received training. Options exist for partial implementation, but the differences in aims and characteristics of the schools make planning difficult. (FG)

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"EDUCATIONAL CHANGE STRATEGIES FOR THE 80's"

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Kijkduin/The Netherlands

M.A.P.: THE MAVO-PROJEKT

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I BACKGROUND

1.1. Historical and cultural setting

The Dutch post-elementary educational system is made up of several schooltypes, based on which we shall call "categorical" schools. Since 1968, attempts have been made to postpone the final decision as to which type of school would be most suitable for a particular student by introducing a so-called "bridge-year" (in some cases longer) in the secondary schools. One of the largest "categorical" schools is the MAVO-school (± 360,000 pupils).

Children attending these schools were traditionally being prepared for administrative functions.

As from 1968, this school consisted of a three-year course concluded by an examination in five subjects and a four-year course concluded by an exam in six subjects.

Practically speaking, this meant the possibility of a two-level course within one type of school. It was not long before a high-stream and a low-stream division developed within this system.

1.2. It turned out however that the chances for low-stream pupils to pass on to vocational and higher education were drastically limited. As a result the number of pupils attending this type of schools decreased.
Moreover a great number of low-stream pupils who passed their finals stayed another year to do the four year course exams.
Because of these and other developments the population of the MAVO-school became more and more heterogeneous and consequently the problems for the teachers increased.

1.3. The Ackermans-committee

In 1971 a committee was formed to make a report on the situation. In 1972 this committee concluded that a solution to the problems stated above could be found in a reorganisation of the MAVO-schools.

A reorganisation characterised by:

- four-year program for all pupils
- possibility to conclude the program with an exam in which the pupil can choose from two levels per subject.

Teachers' unions, the ministry of education, school authorities and national pedagogical centres cooperated to form a group to realise the "MAVO-Project", which was officially established by Act of Parliament in 1974.

2. Aims

The aims of the MAVO-Project were formulated as follows:
"to develop ways and means for teachers to enable them, by means of differentiation in content and method, to prepare their pupils for an examination at two levels to be opted for per subject in four years".

The staff of the project would like to add to this that it is not only a matter of reorganising the content.
It is up to the teacher to decide what ways and means there are by which he can individualise his teaching.
This means that the teacher must have the skill to adapt and produce teaching materials. Besides he should be trained in handling necessary changes in classroom procedures.

3. Four basic principles

The workgroup that set out the guidelines for the realisation of the project was led by four principles:

a. The project should be a development as well as a dissemination project.
   This meant that step-by-step, practice-oriented counseling was required and that strategies should be developed which would be applicable to all 1150 MAVO-schools.
b. The project should seriously respect the relative autonomy of the participating schools.

c. The project is time-bound and divided into different stages. It is important that these stages are relatively provisional. Adjustments during the course of events should be possible. In this case we speak of open planning.

4. Organisation

The responsibilities of the MAVO-Project are in the hands of a steering group. This is a board of representatives of various groups which was installed by the Minister of Education in 1975.

The board represents:

The Union of MAVO-teachers	3 members
The Union of headteachers	1 member
The Unions of schoolboards	2 members
The Dutch Association of Teachers	1 member
The Experimental Schools	4 members
The Following Schools	2 members
The National Pedagogical Centres	3 members
The Institute for Curriculum Development	1 member
The Inspectorate for general education	2 deputies
The Inspectorate for vocational education	1 deputy

The task for the "steering group" is:
- to conduct and control the progression of the project
- to give advice to the Undersecretary for Education.

The National Pedagogical Centres were appointed to manage the MAVO-Project. The MAVO-Project is carried out by a staff of educationists (12 members) and a group of teachers which produces teaching materials and advises teachers in the experimental schools.
These members are released from duties at their schools for one or two days per week.

5. Planning

At this moment (February 1981) the MAVO- roject is in its fifth year of execution.

The participation of schools has been developed as follows:

10 Experimental Schools	- preparation	1975-1977
	execution	1977-1980
	evaluation	1980-1981
36 Following Schools	- preparation	1977-1979
	execution	1979-1982
80 Remaining Schools	- preparation	1978-1980
(1st round)	execution	1980-1983
80 Remaining Schools	- preparation	1979-1981
(2nd round)	execution	1981-1984
80 Remaining Schools	- preparation	1980-1982
(3rd round)	execution	1982-1985

At the moment the project is being executed at a cost of ƒ 10,000,000 per year including: costs of materials, seminars, meetings. The money is allocated per year and is expected to decrease as the number of schools decreases.

6. Design

The original set up was according to a R-D-D-model:
Teaching materials were to be produced by the "Experimental Schools" and be disseminated to the "Following Schools".
The design has not been completely successful. Some modifications have been applied to this design.
The principle of the relative autonomy of the schools made the dissemination of materials and procedures vary.
Moreover there are developments in the various subjects that make development of new curricula necessary.
From the very beginning a distinction has been made between what we call the school line and the academic line.

7. The school line

By the school line is meant a supervision in the schools to assist the staff of the schools with the implementation of the new curricula. It is carried out by a project group of external advisors

The members of this group are employed at various levels in the field of education and participate in the MAVO-Project two days a week.

The task of this project group is as follows:

- to prepare the staff of the school for changes in the school system
- to supervise the changes in the system during the progress of the MAVO-Project in the schools.

The target group of the school line supervision is the headmaster and an internal project coordinator of each school.

8. The academic line

For the development on the academic line groups of teachers were formed for fourteen subjects. The majority of these teachers teach in MAVO-schools.

Originally these groups were called: "production groups", but nowadays they are called "assistance groups". They consist of one methodology expert and 10 to 18 members, all released from teaching, for one or two days per week. Their task is to develop curricula for mixed ability teaching. The coordination of the curriculum development is the task of a member of the educational staff of the project.

The assistance groups work on the principles that

a. developing teaching materials should take place in close cooperation with the teachers
b. the developments must proceed step by step.

They organize 5 to 6 sessions a year for teachers all over the country to discuss the principles on which the materials are based and to exchange experiences with classroom procedures.

9. Mixed-ability teaching

With a view to the problems resulting from the low- and high-stream courses as described in 1.2, the MAVO-Project staff concentrates

on the development of various schemes and models to help teachers realize mixed-ability teaching. This in order to keep student groups together till the moment they actually enroll for their appropriate level of exam, thus hoping to reach the aims of the project mentioned in 2.

Whatever the expectations of the project, its ultimate success will definitely depend on the teacher's ability to cope with the changing demands made on his management of classroom-procedures.

10. Evaluation

A distinction is made between product evaluation and process evaluation. The product evaluation is being executed by an external institute on behalf of the ministry. The staff has an advisory role and the steering group must give its consent.

For this evaluation ƒ 500,000 has been budgeted.

The research done up to now is on teacher-attitude change and pupil-attitude change in the project.

The next topic is the effectiveness of the assistance groups.

The process evaluation is done by the educational staff. The process evaluation concerns the results of the teacher-training programmes, the processes of change in the school systems and product evaluation of the materials.

II CHANGE ANALYSIS

a. At the start of the MAVO-Project there were a number of factors that were considered as having a more or less hindering influence on the success of the innovation:

1. There was no selection procedure for the schools or for the assistance groups (VBG's). When the educational staff was appointed the schools had already been selected.

   The second year the staff set up a nation-wide information campaign. It also developed a set of criteria for the experimental status of the schools. This was presented to via the steering group in the ministry.

2. In the original project plan there was place only for subject-centred innovation. The idea was that when you trained teachers the school system would change automatically.

   From the very start the project plan has been adapted towards the idea that the school system as a whole is subject of change. The school line supervision was established in the first year.

3. A considerable handicap was a very undermanned staff and assistance groups.
   This meant curriculum development on more than one subject for a member of the staff.

   When more schools participated more staff members were appointed.

4. Organisational problems increase considerably as the staff is recruited from three different independent institutes.

   The problems of a project organisation in an existing institutional organisation can not be removed entirely.

5. In the seventies the National Pedagogical Centres (LPC) were permeated by the idea that schools would soon go comprehensive. The MAVO-Project did not fit in that picture.
There was no strategy to overcome this handicap, but to give information on what was happening in the project.

6. A project for a categorial school system did not match the policy of the state, which was advocating comprehensivization for secondary schools.
A council of headmasters was organized, which met regularly to discuss their common interests and make their demands in the steering group.

7. There was no unanimity in the Teachers' Union in their support of the project at first. The source of the lack of support lay in the fact that the bulk of lesson hours did not go to the schools but to the LPC.

The Council of Headmasters invited a delegation to ask for support in the press and steering group.

8. The relations between the institutes that provide for research, supervision, decision making, curriculum development in the field of education are very unclear.
That means that a lot of information must be channeled properly and a lot of negotiation must take place.

9. There was no experience in a teacher-training set up connected with a project. There was no concept of adult education underlying the programmes.

A lot of training of the assistance groups has been done, but is still not enough.

b. During the last few years some events have occured and some forces have developed that have a hindering effect on the achievement of the goals of the MAVO-Project. The order in which they are mentioned is

strictly incidental.

1. Teaching materials have been developed by the assistance-groups in cooperation with the teachers of the experimental schools. Neither groups had been trained to write materials and it took a lot of time and energy to get a coherent product.

2. It appeared to be insufficient to train teachers in mixed-ability teaching and provide adequate materials for it. The school as a total system is a unit of change. Much attention must be paid to this aspect of innovation.

3. Much emphasis lay on the production of materials and less on the teacher-training sessions.

4. The pressure on the organisation of the administrative support to accomplish the task of realising communication between the different groups of participants as well as a fluent and accurate distribution of the materials has largely been underestimated.

5. The problems arising from the opinion that a change in teaching procedures can be accomplished without questioning the procedures and problems around the system of course completion including examinations have also been underestimated.

6. There was no political desire to enable the publishing of the additional materials by the government. This meant a lot of negotiation with the G.E.U. (United Educational Publishers) and the independent publishers.

7. With progression of the MAVO-Project the process of changing the curriculum differed in time and impact in the different subjects. This leads to much confusion in the schools.

c. At the present time some forces can be listed that have a positive or negative effect on the achievements of the goals and aims of the MAVO-Project.

Positive	Negative
1. The law passed parliament in 1980 to establish a four-year program in MAVO-schools. This forces the schools to take note of the results of the MAVO-project.	1. Some schools feel let down, because the project as it is organized will end at 1985.
2. The first results of the final exams of the experimental schools are positive.	2. There may be too much stress on the examination results.
3. The experimental schools are willing and able to give information about the processes and procedures that have taken place and the products that result from their activities.	
4. There is a trained and experienced assistance group and the programmes of the teacher-training have been improved.	4. Now that the project is half-way, some people are leaving the assistance group to return to move up in their schools.
5. There is congruence in curriculum development when materials are developed at the grass roots for immediate implementation in the schools.	5. There is little or no help from other institutes that contributes to curriculum development.
6. More and more young teachers are coming from the experimental new pre-service training colleges. They show that adaptation is	6. The young teachers have less experience in classroom procedures, which makes it hard to carry out teaching ideas as they want to. Pre-service training is still too

easier for them than for teachers from the former teacher-training courses.	subject centred. Resistance to new pedagogical insights is hard to break.
7. The Central Institute for Test Development has confirmed that it is very hard to develop graded tests, since there are no criteria.	7. The lack of criteria for grading and the lack of research makes the situation unclear for the schools.
8. There has been a minimum of change in the group of educational staff.	8. A flexible attitude to implement new strategies can be hindered by this fact.

III STRATEGY DESIGN

a. The future

1. In 1981, the first group of schools will leave the MAVO-Project and in 1985 the MAVO-Project draws to an end.
   At that moment there will remain 800 MAVO-schools that have not participated in the project and it is not known if they are interested in or are able to make adaptations to an integrated 4-year program and the possibility of a profiled certificate.

   The possibility exists for schools to choose for partial implementation, the framework that has been developed.

2. More and more schools are going comprehensive and will possibly choose for mixed-ability teaching. This is what is happening at the moment with many schools in the project.

3. There are schools which have problems for which the MAVO-project has no answer, though the schools in the project are confronted by them, such as:
   - pupil supervision, job orientation
   - increasing number of non-Dutch-speaking children
   - changes in school organisation
   - the transition between the "bridge" year(s) of general education and the following year of "categorical" education.

4. The policy-making of the ministry is a policy of projects.
   So it can be expected that a lot of different materials come into the schools let alone all the different activities that are going to take place.

   The four developments mentioned may lead to the conclusions that
   - the aims of the schools in their common struggle to cope with change are not the same
   - the nature and content of changing activities cannot be the same for all schools.

b. The experiences and strategies developed in the MAVO-Project should be available for schools which want to change of move on to more flexible teaching.

The teachers' unions have already agreed on 4 principles that underly the strategies of dissemination.

1. The school system is the unit of change. That means that the school team decide on the nature, content, and phasing of the process of change they want to achieve.
   The support from external institutes must respond to their demands, which implies that the different institutes be on clear terms with one another.

2. A process of change in a school system is very complex. It means a lot of involvement on all kinds of levels in the school. It means that a process of change must be planned in time (years).

3. The more complex processes of change make it necessary that schools plan the developmental lines, in which choices are considered as to the nature, content and organisation of the desired change and the necessary support from external institutes.

4. In a plan of development there should be a balance between the school line and the academic line.